

Sermon: Walking in the Light

Text: [I John 1:5-10 ESV](#)

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Introduction: These last six verses in [chapter 1 of I John](#) are packed full of truth and what it means to be, (to use Paul's phrase), "in Christ." John talks about truth in word and deed as a fellowship with God, the Father and Jesus, His Son. "Walking in the Light" is not just about knowledge or correct doctrine, as important as that is, but this *walking* in the Light is about our relationship with God. Listen to our text this morning and hear the words: light and darkness, and fellowship (community).

One must also understand this revelation and partnership with God is conditional. The little two-letter word "IF" is found throughout these 6 verses, five times. These ifs are what are called 3rd-class conditional statements. "The third class condition often presents the condition as uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely. There are, however, many exceptions to this...The third class condition encompasses a broad range of potentialities in Koine Greek. It depicts what is likely to occur in the future, what could possibly occur.

Let's listen to the text: [I John 1:5-10 ESV](#) ⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

C. H. Dodd wrote: "The Church is a society of people, who believing in a God of pure goodness, accept the obligation to be good like Him."

I. Christian Community Exhibits a Unique Message (v. 5).

[5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light,](#)

This is no ordinary message. It is a divine Word. It is good news and what is commonly called the Gospel. This message is"

A. God is Light.

There are so many items for which light can be a metaphor or symbol. Here it is probably referring to both truth and purity. Truth and purity are qualities we need in community. Lies and immorality can break the strongest union. One of the major reasons our world is in such trouble is that there is no framework for even discussing purity and truth.

In Scripture we are associated with Jesus, the Light of the world when he says that we also are a light to the world (**Matthew 5:14**) and can't be hidden - just like a city on a hill.

Diversity that is constantly talked about today is a wonderful concept and needs to be honored (as it relates to the functioning of the Body of Christ), however, when it comes to ideals and the Truth, Diversity is NOT a welcome table guest. Without Truth that is held in common there can be no community. One cannot build community or fellowship on a global variety of ethics and ideas. It very well may take a village to raise (rear) a child, but it has to be a very special village - one committed to God and His ideas and Truth.

Speaking about God, John declares: **v.5b** “in him is no darkness at all.” So it is, that:
B. Light and darkness cannot coexist.

The Apostle John makes it clear in his letter to the church that some entities are just diametrically opposed to each other. Just like light and darkness cannot coexist - neither can a person in community with God hate his brother. That person John insists is a liar, and the language used by God's children and about God's children is the Truth.

Whenever light is introduced to darkness, light wins and conquers the darkness. It is only when light is removed from an environment that darkness overcomes. There is a sense where the only way darkness wins is when light is withdrawn (public education vs. homeschool). “Light can be shut out, but it cannot be shut in.” (Plummer, p. 80)

Jesus said in **John 12:46 ESV** ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

II. Christian Community Exhibits a Unique Conduct (vv. 6-7).

6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

A. There are standards which exclude.

Every community has standards of conduct - certain behavior is expected. There might even be rules or laws. The Christian community, as she walks in the Light, is no exception, because God knows and wants us to know that sin will alienate us from Him and each other. In fact, sin that is intentional and habitual will cause us to be removed from the Community if there is no real repentance and confession.

Even in a secular world, Cicero knew, “Real friendship is impossible without virtue.”

Everyone makes mistakes, but not even trying to do what is right may be the only unforgiveable attitude (sin). A part of the early Church fell into the trap of intentionally sinning - thinking that would bring more Grace thus endearing themselves to God even more. But Paul tried to correct this false concept of more sin bringing more grace.

Romans 6:1-4 ESV ¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

7a But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,

B. There are standards which include.

Another distortion may come that you need to be perfect (or can be) to be a Christian. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is, in fact, the realization that we are sinners that can put us in touch with our Savior. It is that daily understanding that sin is in our lives that makes room for forgiveness and grace to be extended to us.

Illus. A person may be a very bad musician yet have a passion for music like a deaf person, yet God knows our heart and our intention.

We need to be truthful. John says to be in a right relationship with God, the Father, we must have a standard of conduct that is truthful. C. S. Lewis said, “The true Christian’s nostril is to be continually attentive to the inner cesspool.” Paul shocks us when he says, **Romans 7:24 ESV** ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Paul was not guilty of low self-esteem, but he knew who (how) he was in relationship to Jesus.

Illus. A person may be very conscious of his/her moral failures, yet passionately in love with God in Christ. David of the O.T. is a good example of this seeming contradiction (a man after “God’s own heart), yet he was a murderer, liar, adulterer. The Apostle Paul struggles with these kind of issues. **Romans 7:14-20 ESV** ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

If we do have fellowship with and live in community with God and each other, then **verse 7b** is also true: **and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.** Being purified of our sin is a constant need in all our lives. How is it that we can become clean again when we sin AFTER our baptisms?

III. Christian Community Exhibits Confession (vv. 8-10).

8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

What confession is NOT: Confession is not the only action needed to be saved. Confession is not a sacrament administered by a priest like in the Roman Catholic Church. It is also not a saving act when we confess sins to each other, even though saying it may be cathartic (getting it off one's chest). We confess our sins to God through Jesus Christ - who absolutely knows what it is to be tempted.

But confessing one's sins to another brother or sister in Christ like what is prescribed in **James 5:16** is more about encouragement and accountability than actual forgiveness.

Illus. "Confess your sins to the Lord and you will be forgiven: confess them to man and you will be laughed at." - Josh Billings

What confession IS: In confession, we acknowledge our lack of faith, our distance, our hardheartedness. Before a loving and gracious God, we declare our sin without excuse and ask for another opportunity to show our love to God.

We cannot blame our sinful condition on:

1. heredity (parents, family)
2. environment (wrong crowd)
3. temperament
4. physical condition (young or too old)

No list of conditions relieve us of our responsibility to lead lives that will glorify God.

A. Confession purifies us.

Sin is like a man's beard. Although we daily destroy its manifestation, it constantly reappears.

Many of us who are trying to get rid of sin are like housewives who destroy the spiders' webs without destroying the spiders.

You have heard the expression “to come clean.” Even fallen humanity understands the importance of confessing and admitting guilt.

Douglas Steere talks of an examination of conscience: “This is a time where a soul comes under the gaze of God and where in His silent and loving Presence this soul is pierced to the quick and becomes conscious of the things that must be forgiven and put right before it can continue to love *the* One whose care has been so constant.”

B. Confession restores our relationships.

Have you ever waited on your child to confess something you already knew? And you knew that they didn’t know you knew. That’s the way God is with us. He waits patiently, hoping for our repentance and confession.

God has always wanted unlimited fellowship and communion with His creation. But from the very beginning it has been man’s instinctive nature to hide from God when he sinned.

Richard Foster on Confession, p. 151

Not only is it true that “we love, because he first loved us,” but we are enabled to make confession only and especially because he first loved us (**I John 4:19**). The evidence of mercy and grace sparks a contrite heart and allows confession to flow, We are drawn to Him as Hosea tells us, “with cords of compassion, with the bands of love” (**Hosea 11:4**). We come with hopeful hearts, for the One we are coming to waits for us like the father of the prodigal who saw his son when he was still a great way off and in compassion ran and embraced him and welcomed him back (**Luke 15:20**). His greatest delight is to forgive. He calls his angels into celebration whenever one person repents and admits sin.”

Ibid, p. 153

“Confession begins in sorrow, but it ends in joy. There is celebration in the forgiveness of sins because it results in a genuinely changed life.”

C. Confession creates a breach.

Confession is a break from the past (even yesterday). Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book *Life Together*, p. 115 writes: “In confession the break-through to new life occurs. Where sin is hated, admitted, and forgiven, there the break with past is made. ‘Old things are passed away.’ **But where there is a break with sin, there is conversion (almost like a second work of grace - Nazarene doctrine). Confession is conversion.** “Behold, all things are become new” (**II Corinthians 5:17**). Christ has made a new beginning with us.”

As the first disciples left all and followed when Jesus called, so in confession the Christian gives *up* all and follows. Confession is discipleship. Life with Jesus Christ and His community has begun.”

Proverbs 28:13 ESV ¹³ Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

In confession the Christian begins to forsake his sins. Their dominion is broken. From now on the Christian wins victory after victory.

What happened to us in baptism is given to us again in confession, i.e., the forgiveness of sins. We are delivered out of darkness into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. That is “joyful” news. Confession is the renewal of the joy of baptism.

Self-forgiveness can never lead to a breach with sin; this can be accomplished only by the judging and pardoning Word of God itself.

D. Confession is about forgiveness.

These six verses we are looking at this morning are just peppered with two, two-letter words: **if and we**. The ifs are all about a condition that must be met to stay in a right relationship with God and Jesus. **Verses 6, 8, and 11** introduced statements of false doctrine where if practiced will hurt our fellowship with God and His Son, Jesus Christ. **Verses 7 and 9** talk about a healthy and positive action that will keep us in community with God and His Son.

At the end of this passage it basically says that if we pretend we do not have a sin problem, God’s word (logos) i.e., Jesus, is not in us.

Forgiveness requires confession and obedience to demonstrate our love for the Father. If we do anything less we make Jesus out to be a liar. In this holy relationship, we can hurt our reputation, but more importantly God’s glory is diminished in the eyes of others. It should always be our goal, as John indicates in his writing, to abide, remain and live in Christ - Who is the Truth and the Light. Our fellowship with God needs to always be protected and cherished.

Conclusion: *The Word in Life Study Bible*, p. 583 - “Truthfulness, clarity, consistency, and honesty should be basic qualities of Christ’s followers. They are things that last in the eyes of God, and they matter most to those who are evaluating the faith. We should offer nothing less.”

The whole purpose of our faith community (church) is to be a faithful witness for Jesus who is “the Word of life.” This would include how we act in both word and deed. But just doing and saying the right things is not really enough, is it? God requires you give Him your heart and love Him.

“St. John’s ‘eternal life’ has nothing to do with time, but depends on our relation(ship) to Jesus Christ.” - A. Plummer

John tells us that relationship is born from love and born from above ([John 3](#)).

What is your relationship with Jesus Christ?

Do you love Jesus? Have you obeyed Him by repenting of your sin and been baptized for the forgiveness of your sin?

Illus. The only way we are ever brought out of darkness is when the Light of the world enters the house where we live and introduces Himself. We can invite Him to stay or ask Him to leave because He requires too much. The only way we return to darkness is by leaving God behind, closing the door behind us.

Jesus never comes into our lives uninvited though, nor does He leave without being asked.

Would you invite Him into your life this morning?

He will come in if you are willing.